

from the exposed ledge over the densely wooded lower part of Els Ravine, and across the Newlands reservoirs to the Cape Flats.

The open grassy top portion of Els Ravine will be described as part of the traverse from Ascension Ravine to Knife Edge.

NEWLANDS RAVINE AND LEDGES ROUTE

(D-Fir Tree: Map I, Tm-Tk; Views 3 and 4)

NEWLANDS RAVINE is the middle of the three gullies leading to the *Saddle*, the plateau between Devils Peak and Table Mountain. The ravine is marked by a characteristic long, narrow stone scree, beginning at the level of the Contour Path. The starting point D on the Contour is about 40 yards to the right, that is the Devils Peak side of that spot where the Contour crosses the scree, and where you have a direct view up Newlands Ravine. At D there is no cairn and the beginning of the ascent is not obvious, but a little higher up you find a path which leads somewhat to the left and then alongside the stone scree. Above the level of the scree are some ladder steps leading over a line of fencing (1600ft.), and a little higher still you enter the gully itself. After that there is a choice of paths, one keeping to the left, and the other more or less along the middle of the ravine. The buttress on the right has a break in it where a big rock fall occurred some years ago. The bottom of the ravine is a favourite spot for obtaining a good echo. The Saddle is reached at the 2300ft. level (D¹), and the very steep ascent of Newlands Ravine takes about an hour and a half.

The very popular Ledges Route is described here with the Newlands Ravine ascent, but, of course, any of the paths leading to the Saddle may be used to approach "Ledges". At the top of Newlands Ravine turn at once left on to the path that mounts steeply to the *Knife Edge*. Keep very

carefully to the track, because it is easy to get lost on small traversing paths to the right. At one point about 100 feet above D¹ the track goes on the *inside* of a piece of rock that juts out rather characteristically. Above this part are one or two small rock pitches (nail marks), but up to the Knife Edge the ascent is still classified as "A". The Knife Edge is the narrow ridge marking the top of Els Ravine (Views 3 and 7). You reach the Knife Edge (2600ft.) not at its extreme north end, but at a point a little nearer to the mountain face. Walk along the Knife Edge towards the mountain. The path leads for a short distance to the right along the foot of the rocks, until you come to a characteristic slanting piece of rock. Here the Ledges Route proper starts.

Ledges Route (View 4).—Climb up on the inside of the slanting rock, to the left along a short, narrow traverse, then up some easy rocks to the *first ledge*. Just to the right of the traverse there is a very dependable trickle of water from a spring coming out of the rock. From the first to the *second ledge* involves a short open chimney problem, called the *Giant's Step*; this can be avoided by ascending among the easier rocks on the left. Ledges Route is a popular one, and there are cairns at all the points where there is difficulty in finding the way. Above the second ledge the path leads steadily over to the left, gradually gaining the suburban side of the mountain face. You pass above a fir tree that seems to be the last tree growing before the highest rock cliff is reached.

From this point onwards the directions must be somewhat detailed, because it is easy to miss the entrance to a *Chimney* that is an important feature of the next section. Continue to the left along the path for about 100 paces beyond the uppermost tree just mentioned, then up a short distance, another piece to the left with a step-over, then up again; here one or two small cairns will be seen. The inconspicuous entrance to the chimney is just above this point. Once inside a small cave, go for a short distance to the right along a low tunnel, with the narrow chimney at the end almost before you have come out of the tunnel (nail marks); rucksacks

have to be handed up. From the top of the chimney follow the nail marks on the rock, and some further easy scrambling leads to the *top ledge* (3100ft.).

The route then bears still further to the left, underneath the projecting mountain cliff where you have to bend very low, or even to get on all fours. On the other side of this passage is the final section which leads to the top. Here is the one rock pitch which makes the route into a "B" climb, and you may require a rope. Get up the 12-15 foot crack (facing right), and land in a sitting position on a jutting-out piece of rock on the left side of the crack. Then carefully rise and traverse to the left, using a firm tree root as a handhold. The rest of the climb needs care, but there is no special difficulty. The top is reached at *Fir Tree* (3300ft.; camping spot).

LEVEL TRAVERSE FROM ASCENSION RAVINE TO KNIFE EDGE

(Map I, Wm-Tm; View 3)

THIS WALK links the two summit ascents just given. If one looks at the mountain from Newlands or Claremont it is clear that only the upper part of Ascension Ravine is possible for ordinary scrambling. Reach this part of the ravine as described previously (pp. 23, 24). In order to do the traverse, get into Ascension Ravine at a slightly lower level than if planning the ascent. A single pine tree growing in the stone scree of Ascension Ravine (about 2400ft.) is a convenient landmark to make for.

From here a slight ascent brings you to the broad grass ledge under the final 1000ft. cliff of the mountain. It is best to keep as close to the foot of the rock as possible. Sometimes traces of a path are seen, more often not. The walking is difficult and tedious, and this is characteristic of the whole traverse. Walkers are constantly struggling with prickly

undergrowth, and there are whole plantations of blister bush; it is hardly possible to avoid contact with the latter, and blisters may come out on the legs and arms a day or two later. The small sketch of the blister bush leaf (Fig. 1) will enable you to recognize the plant. The colour of the leaf is a light green in the young bush, a much darker green in the older plant.

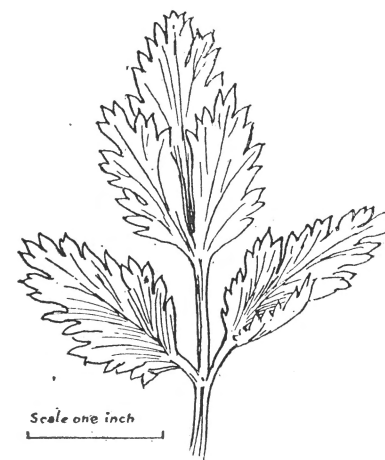


Fig. 1.—The leaves of the blister bush.

At the section of the mountain directly below *Fir Tree* there is usually a trickle of water, even in the summer (camping site). Beyond this spot the traverse appears to reach an impasse, but this is only apparent. It is necessary to descend at least 100 feet and to traverse below the sheer rock face until the open top portion of *Els Ravine* is reached. After that, straight up the steep grass slope of this ravine to the *Knife Edge* (2600ft.), where you link up with the path leading to the Ledges Route (p. 27). The whole walk takes two to three hours and is not specially recommended.

DARK GORGE

E-E': Map I, Tm-Fm; Map II, Mr-Ko; View 3)

DARK GORGE is the ravine immediately to the north, that is, on the Devils Peak side of the Newlands Ravine. The start on the Contour Path (E) is about 200 yards away from the point on the Contour where you look up the stone scree below Newlands Ravine. The easiest approach to E is from Newlands. If you prefer to come from the Rhodes Memorial

grounds of the Ranger's house, is another *signpost* with three directing signs: (1) *Nursery and Skeleton*; (2) *Kasteels Poort*; (3) *Maclears Beacon and Platteklip*. There is no difficulty in finding your way from here to the Mountain Club huts and to the top of Kasteels Poort (T¹). The walk from one side to the other takes a little more than half an hour, and it always comes as a surprise how quickly the Back Table can be crossed here.

TOP OF SKELETON TO MACLEAR'S BEACON

(Map I, Xi-Wk)

FROM the top of Skeleton Gorge (B¹, 2400ft.) the main direction of this path is north, that is towards the Front Table. At first there is a rather sharp ascent to the top of the next rise; this leads to a level stretch along the edge of the mountain, but the path soon turns away from the edge (westwards). The woods are dense and the track must be carefully watched for. Then comes another ascent until, at a height of about 2600ft., you get to the valley above *Window Gorge*. The path here goes past the ruins of a shelter and this is a favourite camping spot. Water is always found, and there is also a small pool near.

From here the path continues in a *north-west* direction, again through a dense wood, until you come up against the fencing of the reservoir catchment area. Points of the compass are mentioned in preference to other directions, because walkers are often overtaken by clouds, which come suddenly and blot out all the surrounding landmarks; a compass should always be carried in the rucksack. Turn right at the fence for about 25 yards, then cross a little wooden bridge fenced-in with wire on either side. Now leave the fence and ascend the mountain-side in front of you, the path going up diagonally to the right (east). At the top of the rise the path continues east a little further, then turns left or northwards.

Soon you come to a fork where you must take the left turn. You gradually get back to the fence, and then you reach a corner of the fenced-in area, where there is an important *signpost* (2900ft.) with three directions on it, as follows: (1) "*Skeleton and Nursery*", that is the path on which you have come. (2) "*Kasteels Poort and Blinkwater*", pointing to the path along Echo Valley, the signpost marking the eastern end of this valley (cf. p. 59). (3) "*Maclears Beacon*", pointing to the continuation of the present walk.

The rest of the ascent is easily followed. At a height of about 3200ft. comes a level portion and the path gradually approaches the edge of the mountain. At the end of this section there is a fork; the right-hand path leads to the edge and to *Carrell's Ledge* (see below). Take the left turn, which ascends again, and here are one or two simple rock scrambles. At the 3400ft. level look out for another forking of the path. The right turn leads around the edge of the mountain towards *Fir Tree*, the left continues to Maclears Beacon. Very soon comes another signpost which gives two directions: (1) "*Kasteels Poort and Skeleton*" (downwards). (2) "*Platteklip*" (upwards). Maclears Beacon and the Mountain Club War Memorial are within 100 yards of this spot. The Memorial takes the form of a metal plaque let into a flat rock. On this circular plaque is a relief map of the view seen from the summit, framed by a list of names of members of the club who gave their lives during the 1914-1918 war. The walk from the top of Skeleton to Maclears Beacon takes one and a half to two hours.

CARRELLS LEDGE

(Map I, Wk-Tk; View 18)

THIS sensational traverse can be done as part of the ascent from Skeleton to Maclears Beacon. Take the right-hand turn at the fork mentioned (see above), and a short walk brings you to the edge of the mountain quite near point C¹ or top

of the Ferny Gully climb (p. 25). You look into Ascension Ravine and see the characteristic platform of the *Pulpit* about 400 feet below. The photograph (View 18) gives a clear idea of the ledge. It seems impossible that there should be a traverse in that place, and many persons who look at it from this aspect decide to leave it alone.

There is no risk if you keep well inside at the cost of creeping along, often in a bent position. About a third of the way from the southern end you must step across on a piece of rock which juts out over the precipice; this is usually considered as the "mauvais pas", and in View 18 a figure is seen on the step-over. At the north end, Carrells Ledge gradually works back on to the mountain plateau and becomes a path leading to *Fir Tree*. This traverse has been named after a well-known guide who lost his life on the Matterhorn in 1890.

MACLEARS BEACON TO PLATTEKLIP

(Map I, Wk-Th)

If you stand close to the Mountain Club Memorial the beacon itself is west-north-west from you, and the line joining the two gives the direction of the path across the centre plateau to Plattekliip. It is useful to know this in a mist when there are no other landmarks. Walk towards the beacon and continue in the same direction for 50 to 60 yards, then incline towards the left and find the path which drops down sharply to gain the slightly lower plateau. When walking over the Front Table it is sometimes difficult to keep to the path; especially over the rocky portions. But if the general direction west-north-west is borne in mind (compass) you can usually find it again. After about half an hour's walking you come to the rocky part near the edge of the Table, and you descend a short distance into the hollow at the top of Plattekliip Gorge (K¹).

Alternative path along edge of Centre Table (Map I).— A well-made path leads along the edge of the Centre Table overlooking Cape Town. From Maclears Beacon descend towards Fir Tree, but soon incline left and walk for some distance in the Plattekliip direction until you strike the path; this avoids getting to the edge of the Eastern Table.

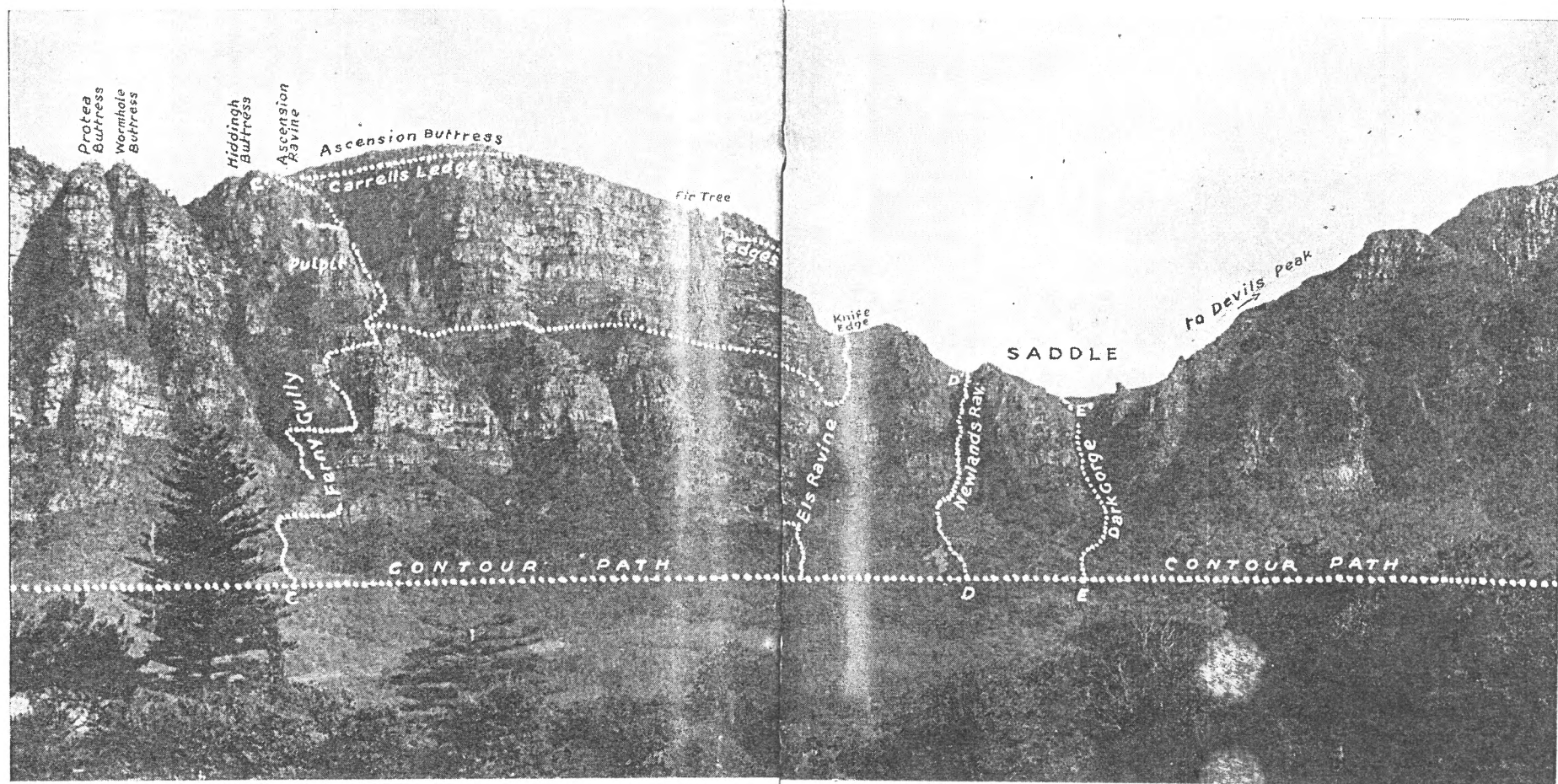
Not far from the path, at a point about one-third of the way to Plattekliip, is the "*Lakelet*", a small expanse of water on the summit plateau. Quite close to the Lakelet, on the Plattekliip side, is a small kopje with a good camping site. In mist you should always choose the path which crosses the plateau in the direct line between Maclears Beacon and Plattekliip, rather than that along the edge of the Front Table.

MOUNTAIN CLUB HUT TO ECHO VALLEY

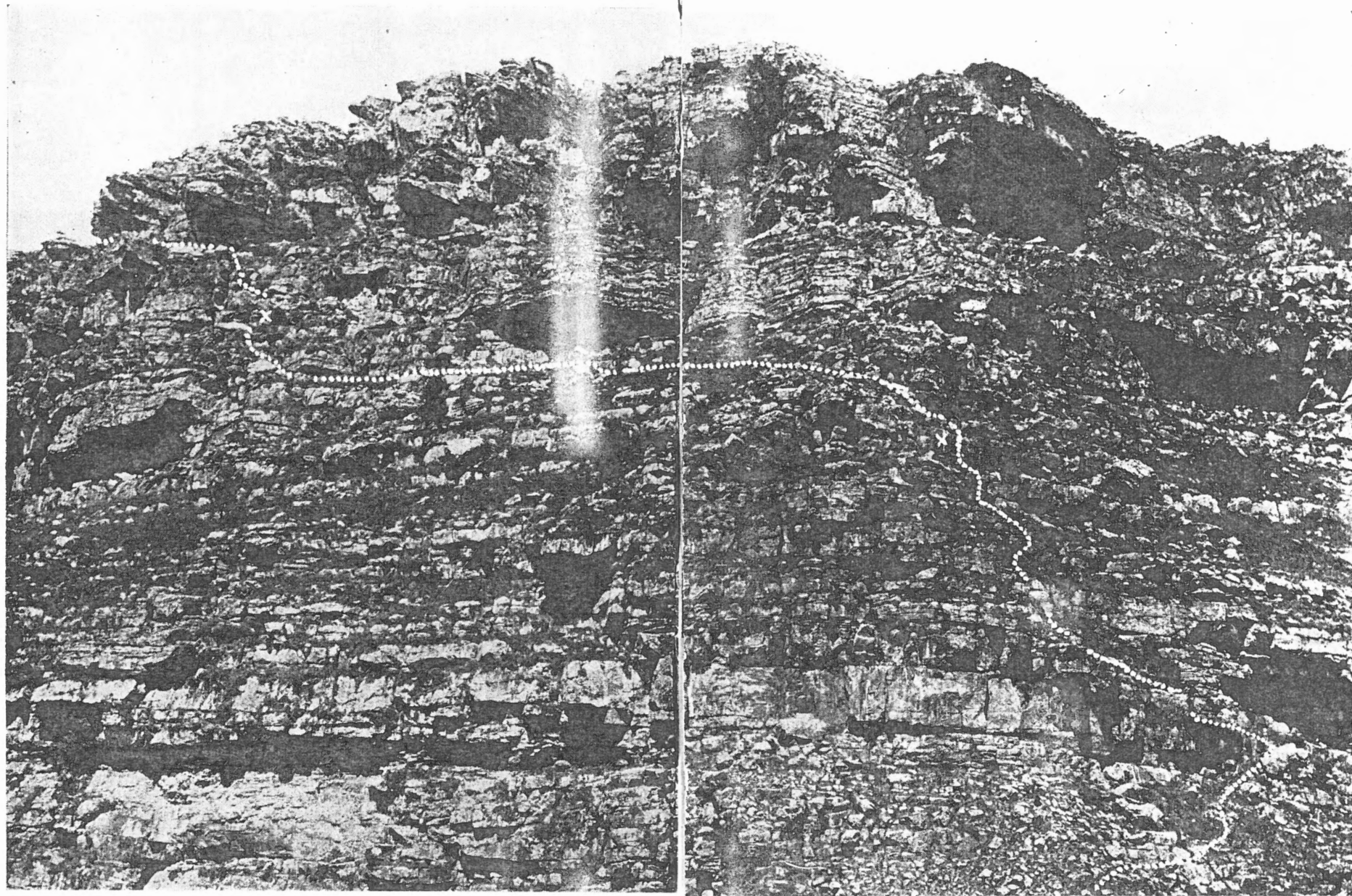
(T¹-P¹: Map I, Wd-Th)

THE signpost at the top of Kasteels Poort near the Mountain Club hut (T¹) may be given as the starting point of this walk. Go in the direction of the *Red Gods Valley*, that is north, the signpost indication being "Spring". In Red Gods note the path from the left which is the end of the Diagonal Route ascent (Q¹, 2500ft.), and at about the same level on the right side of the path there is the small water reservoir for the Mountain Club hut. This part of the mountain is much favoured as a camping ground.

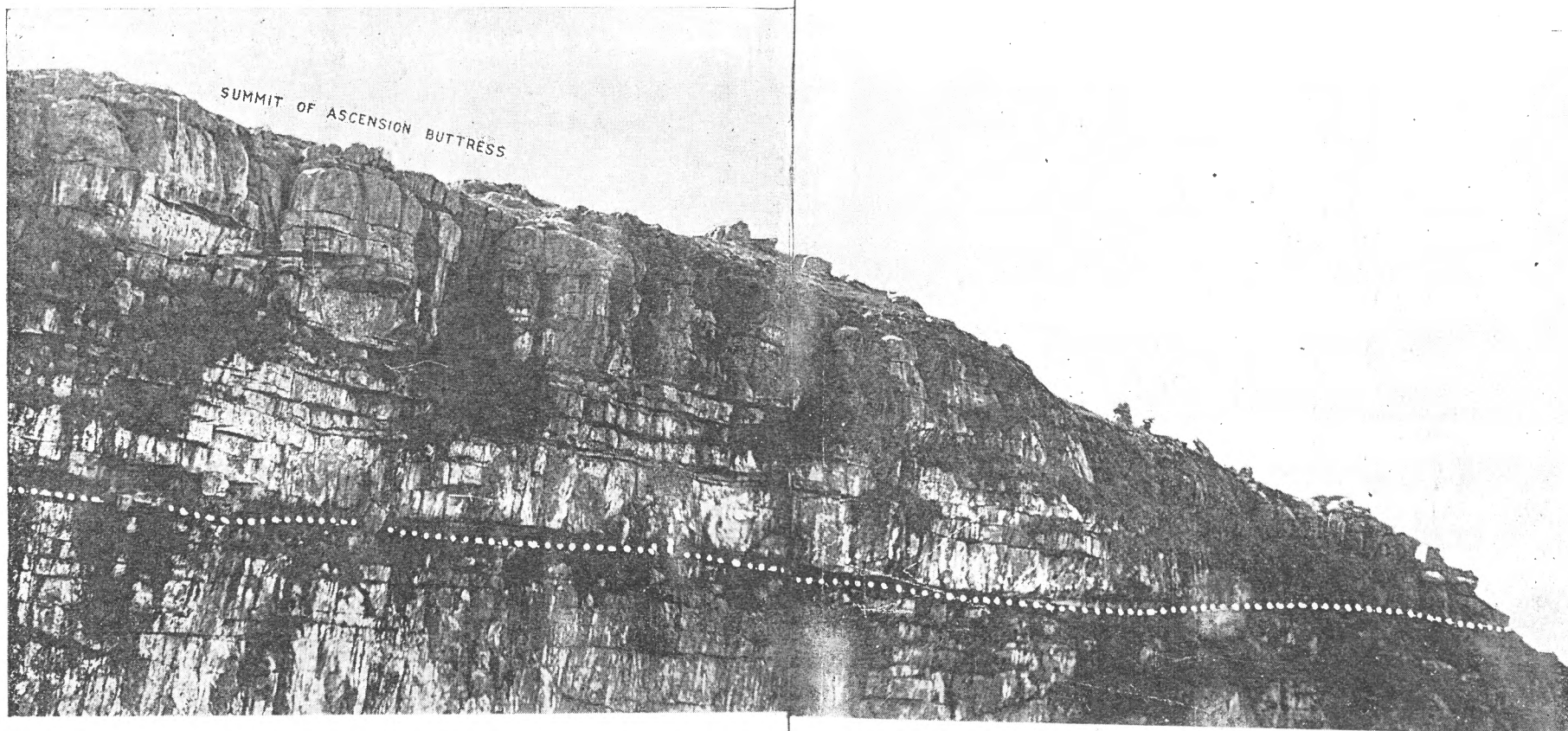
From Red Gods the path begins to mount steeply; the first portion is very bushy and the track is often hidden. At the top of the steep section (2900ft.) the path forks. Up to here the general direction was north or towards the Front Table. Take the right turn and the path now goes east for a considerable distance (about six minutes' walking on the flat). A little way along the path, the Upper Cableway Station and Restaurant come into view, but are soon out of sight again, becoming hidden by an intervening ridge.



View 3.—Table Mountain and the Saddle from Newlands, showing the Contour Path, the Ferry Gully-Ascension Ravine climb, the Newlands Ravine and Ledges Route, the Dark Gorge ascent, the Traverse from Ascension Ravine to Knife Edge and Carrells Ledge.



View 4.—The Ledges Route seen from Knife Edge. The first X indicates the "Giant's Step," the second X the "Chimney."



View 18.—Carrells Ledge, seen from the top of Hiddingh Buttress.